

Message Text

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42

ACTION ARA-10

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TAGS: PFOR PN

SUBJECT: FOREIGN MINISTRY PERSONNEL CHANGES

SUMMARY. THE SUMMARY DISMISSAL OF THREE CAREER DIPLOMATS AND ONE FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIAL WAS ANNOUNCED NOVEMBER 12. THE REASON FOR THEIR DISMISSALS APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN THEIR "COUNTER-REVOLUTIONARY" ATTITUDES. ONE OF THE THREE, DR. SIMON QUIROS GUARDIA, WAS KNOWN TO OCCASIONALLY INDISCREETLY CRITICIZE GENERAL TORRIJOS AND THE NATIONAL GUARD. ONE SOURCE HAS TOLD US THAT FONMIN TACK, WHO WAS IN QUITO AT THE TIME, HAD NOT KNOWN OF THE DECISION BEFOREHAND. END SUMMARY.

1. ACCORDING TO THE NOVEMBER 12 LOCAL PRESS, TWO CAREER DIPLOMATS AND ONE FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIAL HAVE BEEN SUMMARILY REMOVED ("DECLARADOS INSUBSISTENTES") BY DECREE SIGNED BY PRESIDENT LAKAS AND ACTING FOREIGN MINISTER OZORES. THE THREE ARE SIMON QUIROS GUARDIA, DIRECTOR OF THE OFFICE OF INTER-OCEANIC CANAL STUDIES, EMILIO ROYO LINARES, A FORMER DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF THE OFFICE OF INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS (AND MEMBER OF PANAMA'S LOS DELEGATION IN CARACAS), AND HENRY KOURANY, MINISTER-COUNSELOR OF THE PANAMANIAN EMBASSY IN SAN SALVADOR (A FORMER FIRST SECRETARY IN WASHINGTON). WHILE THE PRESS GAVE NO EXPLANATION FOR THEIR REMOVAL, AN EMBASSY SOURCE HAS TOLD US PRIVATELY THAT THE THREE WERE CONSIDERED "COUNTER REVOLUTIONARIES",
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I.E., DID NOT PROPERLY REPRESENT THE POLICIES AND PROGRAMS OF THE

GOP. A RADIO LIBERTAD ANNOUNCEMENT OF THEIR DISMISSAL ALSO DESCRIBED THE TRIO AS COUNTER REVOLUTIONARIES.

2. IN OTHER PERSONNEL ACTIONS, THE GOVERNMENT APPOINTED ERNESTO ENRIQUE ESTENOZ, FORMER AMBASSADOR TO JAMAICA, AS PANAMA'S NEW AMBASSADOR TO ARGENTINA AND NAMED ISABELITA DAMIAN DE ZARDON AS DIRECTOR OF THE MINISTRY'S DIPLOMATIC OFFICE (I.E., OFFICE IN CHARGE OF RELATIONS WITH ALL COUNTRIES EXCEPT THE UNITED STATES). THE DIPLOMATIC OFFICE DIRECTORSHIP HAS BEEN VACANT SINCE THE DEPARTURE OF THE PREVIOUS INCUMBENT, JORGE APARICIO, AS AMBASSADOR TO ALGERIA IN APRIL 1973.

3. COMMENT: KOURANY, WHO WAS ONCE A VERY CAPABLE DIPLOMAT AS FIRST SECRETARY OF THE PANAMANIAN EMBASSY IN WASHINGTON, HAD BEEN IN ECLIPSE SINCE HE LEFT WASHINGTON AFTER A CLASH WITH THEN AMBASSADOR JOSE ANTONIO DE LA OSSA IN LATE 1970. HE BECAME BITTER AND, ACCORDING TO SOME REPORTS, PSYCHOLOGICALLY DISTURBED. LT. COL. NORIEGA HAD ARRANGED HIS APPOINTMENT AS COUNSELOR OF EMBASSY IN EL SALVADOR BUT HE REPORTEDLY CONTINUED TO CRITICIZE THE GOP. ROYO WAS AT ONE TIME A PROTOCOL SECRETARY FOR ARNULFO ARIAS, BUT WE HAD RECEIVED NO REPORTS THAT HE ENGAGED IN CRITICISM OR OTHER "COUNTER REVOLUTIONARY" ACTIVITY. AS FOR QUIROS, HE WAS WIDELY RECOGNIZED FOR HIS ABILITIES, BOTH IN HIS POSITION IN THE FOREIGN MINISTRY AND AS A PHYSICIST AT THE UNIVERSITY OF PANAMA. HE IS PATRIOTIC AND AN ADVOCATE OF A HARD-LINE ON THE CANAL ISSUE, ESPECIALLY CONCERNING MILITARY BASES, ALTHOUGH HE IS FRIENDLY TOWARD THE U.S. AND MAINTAINED EXCELLENT RELATIONS WITH EMBASSY AND CANAL ZONE OFFICIALS. WHILE HE USUALLY EXPRESSED RESPECT AND SOMETIMES PRAISE FOR FOREIGN MINISTER TACK, HE HAD A PENCHANT FOR CRITICIZING GENERAL TORRIJOS AND THE NATIONAL GUARD. THIS IS PROBABLY WHAT CAUSED HIS DISMISSAL. QUIROS TOLD EMBOFF NOVEMBER 17 THAT THE PRESS REPORT OF HIS DISMISSAL WAS THE ONLY EXPLANATION HE HAD RECEIVED. THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE CHANGES CAME WHILE TACK WAS IN QUITO AND ONE SOURCE IN INNER CIRCLE OF GOP TOLD EMBOFF THAT TACK HAD NOT KNOWN OF THE DISMISSALS, AND THAT THEY WERE ORDERED BY TORRIJOS. GONZALEZ

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